(b) and (c) The area under Bt. Cotton Crop in the country has increased from 72,682 acres in 2002 to 12,13,359 acres in 2004. During the same period, the area under Bt. Cotton cultivation increased from 9,404 acres to 1,76,000 acres in Andhra Pradesh.

(d) The Department of Biotechnology has approved large number of transgenic crops like Brinjal, Cotton, Chickpea, Groundnut, Maize, Mustard, Pigeonpea, Rice, Tomato, Cabbage, Cauliflower and Okra for conduct of contained limited field trials including multi-location field trails during 2004-05.

Compensation to poultry farmers of Maharashtra

1198. SHRIMATI HEMAMALINI: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the number of poultry farms working in Maharashtra and the investment made therein as on date;

(b) whether it is a fact that the poultry farmers have started committing suicide due to non-payment of compensation at the rate of Rs. 20/- declared by the State Government because of Bird Flu epidemic;

(c) how much loss is estimated due to Bird Flu epidemic slaughter of hens and reduced rate of meat to poultry farmers; and

(d) the steps taken to provide relief and rehabilitation to poultry farmers of Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI TASLIMUDDIN): (a) In the absence of any requirement for registration of poultry farms, the number of such farms working in the State of maharashtra is not held on record. Similarly, as these poultry farms have been funded from diverse sources, total investment made in them can also not be assessed. However, the '17th Indian Livestock Census, 2003' puts the poultry population in Maharashtra at 37.97 million.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) and (d) An amount of Rs. 270.08 lakh was paid as culling compensation to poultry farmers to compensate their loss. Apart from

this, the Government of India announced a financial relief package for poultry farmers in March 2006, which provides for the following measures:

(i) A moratorium of one year on repayment of existing principal and interest on loans and working capital due to scheduled banks, cooperative banks and Regional Rural Banks.

(ii) Conversion of working capital into term loan. The first year of repayment would be after the expiry of moratorium period.

(iii) Re-scheduling of term loans availed by units over an additional period of two years from the agreed tenor of the term loan.

(iv) After conversion of working capital into term loan, poultry units may be permitted to draw additional working capital depending on the commercial viability of each unit.

(v) barring willful! defaulters, defaulted accounts not be treated as NPAs.

(vi) Grant of one time interest subvention of 4% for a period of one year on the outstanding principal amount as on 31.03.2006 (not including any part of the principal amount that has become overdue).

Time limit for payment under Crop Insurance Scheme

† 1199. PROF. ALKA BALRAM KSHATRIYA: Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to fix a time limit for the payment under crop insurance scheme by modifying the rules thereof;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) if no, the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI KANTILAL BHURIA): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Admissible claims under National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (HAIS) are worked out and settled by the Agriculture Insurance Company of India Ltd. (AlC) on the basis of yield data made available by the State Government concerned. Normally,

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.